Consultation Workshop on User Interface Platform for Health and Disaster Risk Reduction Sectors within the Global Framework for Climate Services

Concept Note

Background
In 2009, Heads of States and Governments, Ministers and Heads of Delegation representing more than 150 countries, 34 United Nations Organizations and 36 Governmental and non-Governmental international organizations present at the Third World Climate Conference (WCC – 3) unanimously adopted a Declaration establishing the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) to strengthen the production, availability, delivery and application of science-based climate prediction and services.

Acting on WCC-3 Declaration, a taskforce of high-level independent advisors was appointed through an intergovernmental process to prepare a report, including recommendations on the proposed elements of the GFCS and the next steps for its implementation. In its report released in May 2011, the high-level taskforce (HLT) stressed that: (i) climate is a critical factor in sustainable development and in the lives and livelihoods of all people, particularly climate extremes that cause loss of lives and significant socio-economic impacts worldwide, but overwhelmingly in developing countries; (ii) where they exist, needs-based climate services are extremely effective in helping countries, businesses, organizations and governments to manage their risks and take advantage of the opportunities associated with the climate, and (iii) there is a significant gap between the needs for climate services and their current provision, particularly in places that need them most: climate-vulnerable developing countries. Present capabilities to provide climate services do not exploit all that we know about climate, fall far short of meeting present and future needs, and are not delivering their full potential benefits.

Figure 1. Drought whose impact can be minimized by the use of climate services

The Sixteenth Session of the World Meteorological Congress (May 2011) endorsed the broad thrust of the HLT report, and set in motion a process for the development of a draft implementation plan for GFCS.

The GFCS is envisaged as a set of national, regional and international arrangements that will coordinate the activities and build on existing efforts to provide climate services that are truly focused on meeting user needs. To be useful, climate information and services must be tailored to meet the needs of the users. The HLT identified agriculture, water, health sectors as well as disaster risk reduction (DRR) within all sectors as priority areas for which climate services are to developed. Existing climate services are not well focused on user needs across these areas and the level of interaction among providers and various users is inadequate.

The User Interface Platform

The structure of the GFCS proposed by the high-level taskforce includes five pillars (User Interface Platform; Climate Services Information System; Observations and Monitoring; Research, Modeling and Prediction; and Capacity building).

The User Interface Platform (UIP) is essentially concerned with bridging the gap between climate information providers and users. It is intended to clarify user requirements; improve climate services including through sector- and user-specific applications of climate information and service delivery tools; develop and implement standards and good practices for the interaction between providers and users; promote mutual sharing of information and knowledge including on providers’ and users’ capabilities and strengths; improve user understanding of climate products and information; collect and act on feedback from users for continual product improvement; and inevitably to facilitate improved decision-making or climate risk management and adaptation in sectors and activities that are influenced by climate variability and change. The UIP also facilitates user liaison/engagement with the other components of GFCS, as required.

Context
The meteorological community has a long-standing collaboration with national stakeholders
in health, DRR, and other sectors for the development of early warning systems (EWS), with engagement of development and humanitarian agencies working in these areas. The Bangladesh Cyclone Preparedness Programme developed with the collaboration of the United Nations Development Programme and the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies and the establishment of Climate and Health Working Groups in Africa to initiate and build on the collaboration between the health and climate communities are among such examples. However, issues such as the understanding of meteorological warnings and information continue to pose hurdles that limit effective use. Beyond EWS many other applications such as risk assessment sectoral planning and financial risk transfer were identified as areas that would require enhanced climate services for improved multi-sectoral decision making. Constraints such as these will be addressed through the implementation of the UIP of the GFCS.

On the other hand, recent advances in the understanding of the climate system, aided by advances in computing and telecommunications allow, today, the production of climate services for time scales ranging from months to seasons to decades and longer time scales. These emerging services offer great opportunities for improved planning/risk management among many socio-economic sectors. The UIP aims to ensure the realization of the full benefit of this progress within the climate services.

Purpose of the consultation workshops

The agriculture, water, health and DRR sectors were identified as key priority sectors by the high-level taskforce for the implementation of the GFCS.

The proposed consultation workshop is targeted at key UN and international agencies and selected experts from the health sector and DRR community. It is intended to facilitate discussion of critical issues related to the production, availability, delivery and application of user-targeted climate services in these sectors with a view to develop a detailed set of recommendations relating to the development of the UIP to be considered for inclusion within the draft implementation plan of the GFCS.

Expected Outcome

Identification of concrete projects on health and DRR to be included in the draft implementation plan, as part of the UIP of the GFCS to advance the use of climate information in decision making in the health sector and DRR decision making across sectors.

Organization of the Consultation Workshops

It is proposed that the workshop be co-hosted by the leading organizations dealing with health, DRR and climate services, namely IFRC, UN-ISDR, WHO and WMO. The tentative dates of 14 to 16 November 2011 are proposed.

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